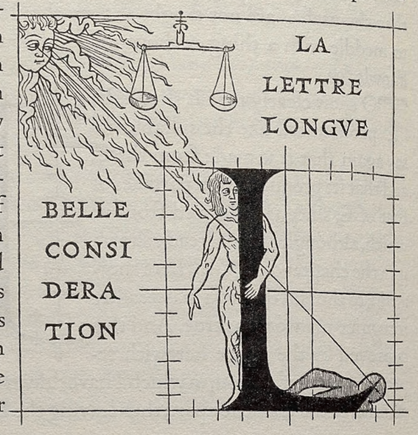
THIS shows plainly how the L is derived from the E, and that it should be pronounced *el,* as I have said, and not *elle,* wherein many ignorant persons go astray every day; and he who first invented the rebus, *Elle est tornee a tort,* which consists of an L reversed and a crooked [*tortu*] A, falsified the true pronunciation. But he is to be forgiven, because of the license permitted and granted to such joyous devisers of amorous trifles.

L Is pronounced awry in the provinces of Burgundy and Forest, when it is given the sound of R, as I have heard done by many young students of those provinces, when they came hither to the University of Paris where I was then a teacher. Instead of saying *mel, fel, animal, Aldus,* and *albus,* and many other like words, they would pronounce them *mer, fer, animar, Ardus,* and *arbus,* which is a corruption of the true pronunciation, and which often not only causes confusion of meaning, but is the contrary of what is meant. Wherefore, I entreat fathers and teachers to look well to it, and to accustom their children and pupils to pronounce properly. It is one of the finest qualities of a worthy man and good orator, to pronounce well.

I Have said hereinbefore, in several places in the Second Book, that our fine Attic letters are related to the nine Muses & the seven Liberal Arts. I propose to show here by a figure of Astrology, which is one of the said seven Liberal Arts, the explanation of the horizontal arm of the letter L, & therewith that it is the centre & navel of the Alphabet.

THE letter L was designed and drawn by the ancient writers in its relation to the human body and to its shadow cast by the Sun when it is in the sign of the Balance,—or, as we say, of Libra,—in the month of September. A naked man, standing with his feet together in the Sun's rays when it is in the sign of Libra, represents the shape of the said letter



L, by drawing an oblique line from the outer end & acute angle of the foot to the upper end and angle, also acute, of the said letter. To make this manifest to the eye, I have designed & drawn the figure which you see here. And as I have meditated upon this instructive and explicative figure, it has seemed well to me to quote here a right witty passage written long ago by the most witty of all ancient poets, Plautus by name, who calls this letter L, *Literam longam,* or long letter, meaning thereby to signify that a man or a woman hanged by the neck represents with his body and his feet the letter L; as is most ingeniously and learnedly set forth by Philippe Beroaldus* & Jehan Baptiste le piteable,—whom I saw and heard read in public twenty years since at Bonoigne la Grace,—commentators both upon the said Plautus. And it is in that part of the comedy called *Aulularia,*† where the old woman Staphyla says: *Nec quicquam melius est mihi, vt opinor, quam ex me vt vnam faciam literam longam, laqueo collum quin obstrinxero.* That is to say: 'There is nothing better for me, as I believe, than that I should make of myself a long letter by hanging and strangling myself by the neck with a cord.'

Rhodiginus, in the sixth book of his ancient lessons, at Chapter VIII, is of a contrary opinion to that of the commentators above mentioned, Beroaldus and Jehan Baptiste le piteable, and says that the long letter is not L, but that it is T that should be understood in Plautus; wherein he seems to me to have little reason. The opinion of the said commentators seems to me better; & I would quote the words of Rhodiginus, were it not that I do not wish to seem to agree with them, and that I should be too long, & might overpass the limits of my subject. I would not, however, reprove the said Rhodiginus, nor indeed can I, because of his learning and the great excellence of the works he wrote. Whether he is stupid in this matter I leave to the judgement of greater and wiser men than I, and I say in his behalf, *Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus,*‡ which is to say, that there is no man so wise who does not sometimes err, as it is said that Homer erred in some passages of his poetic works.

‡ *Horace, Ars. Poet.*, 359. '*Sometimes even the good Homer nods.*'

* *Filippo Beroaldo* (1453–1505), *editor of, and commentator on, the works of many of the classical authors.*

† I, I, 37.

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